

Testimony of
Trubert H. McDaniel
and
Jeff B Richards
before the
Appropriations Committee
Regarding
Proposed SFY 2010-2011 AIDS
Services Reductions
Governor's Mitigation Plan

Thursday, February 18, 2010

We are Trubert H. McDaniel and Jeff B. Richards, residing at 35 Chestnut Street, Norwich. Our mailing address is Post Office Box 724, Norwich Connecticut 06360-0724.

We are Connecticut citizens married to one another under the laws of Connecticut. We have personal and professional experience of relevance to the question of HIV and AIDS prevention and other funding. (They include epidemiology, management, budgeting, public health, quality control, training and evaluation, public relations, strategic planning and other job experiences.)

In mid-life ourselves now, we have already had the experience in the past of seeing our peers – many scores of our friends and colleagues, who were so full of life, including the quintessential 'productive members of society' such as researchers, doctors, teachers, clergy, artists, builders, landscapers and more, many being parents themselves and children of still living parents – sicken and die because of the HIV virus.

Even today, with the advent of HIV anti-viral drug therapy, let no one tell you – or anyone who is at risk for HIV infection – that there is a strategy better than prevention. It is a cornerstone of public health, and the cornerstone of cost containment today and tomorrow.

Furthermore, both of us have had the experience of moving directly from infection with the HIV virus to a diagnosis of AIDS shortly thereafter, a condition known as 'early progression.' Statistically, the outlook at this time for early progressors is murky, or worse. In real life, it has meant that anti-viral therapy indeed slowed the disease for now, but also left each of us disabled, unable to perform work although on drug therapy. We know first hand that the road of infection is anything but smooth. Infection alone can be a deadly event.

This has meant that Connecticut's medical case management system has been crucial to helping us maintain our health, and prevent worsening health and costs associated with it. Because we are uninsurable under the present system, our options have been few. Still, we worked many years and paid into Social Security and other benefits systems. So many have not paid in, and both they and society really suffer when they become infected, and then disabled.

Connecticut must look very hard at cutbacks to prevention and its calculus. Today's HIV infections are occurring far too often in those at the beginning of their adult lives. The implications to them, and to Connecticut, are staggering. We do not assume that their health and well being is assured by current therapies throughout their potential working lives, and neither should you. We believe that the emotional and other burdens of HIV infection always have a multiplicity of lifelong impacts ranging from the financial to

educational to those affecting emotional health, family connections, and even childbearing.

Because of these and many other factors, Connecticut cannot allow its own youth to become complacent about HIV when there is no cure, when we have inadequately funded public health follow-up case-finding and when we lack effective partner notification mechanisms.

The demographics of HIV infection continue to change, and no one is sure how this will continue to evolve over time. That in itself demands that prevention efforts must not be cut back now in the absence of such knowledge.

In summary, from our standpoint as citizens, taxpayers, and those now with AIDS diagnoses, we respectfully request that AIDS prevention funds not be cut. We believe that experience and science both show clearly that prevention is the foundation of modern public health when confronted with an epidemic without cure, where ongoing testing and treatment is hugely expensive, and the long-term outcomes, although good, are still not fully known in terms of lifetimes.

We especially ask that the State of Connecticut remember today, in February 2010, that its own youth is at high risk for becoming infected with HIV. Such infection will *always* have consequences, for the individual, a partner, that family, those friends, the school, the community and the State itself. Prevention for and protection of youth make keeping the budget whole is Connecticut's best choice.

Thank you.

